Mildred Trevanion

BY THE DUCHESS.

CHAPTER I.

"Of course, my dear George, if you wish very much to have these people here, they must be asked," said Lady Caroline, regarding her husband attentively through the handle of the tea-urn. The children had just left the room, so she thought it a good opportunity of finally learning his wishes on this subject without the intervention of Mildred's rather vehement opinions. "It is a dreadful nuisance," she said—"and I don't suppose they are the very nicest people in the world for the girls to know; but, if you see no way out of the difficulty, of course there is nothing more to be said."

"Nothing; it cannot be helped now at all events," Sir George returned, running his eyes ruefully over a letter which he held in his hand. "He was an old schoolfellow of mine, you know; and, when he expresses a wish to come and see me, what can I do but write and say how welcome he and his family will be?"

"Exactly so," assented Lady Caroline, "but it is a horrible bore for all that. And how they are to be amused is more than I can tell you. There is a son, is there not, and a daughter?"

"Yes, a son and a daughter. As to amusing them, the young gentleman will hunt, I suppose, and probably ruin one of my best hunters before he leaves; and the girl—oh, I should think she will do very well!" said Sir George, cavalierly. "Mildred will manage about that, and will get some fellows to meet her."

"How did he make his money?" Lady Caroline asked presently, and then began to think with dismay of what the whole countryside would say. It was eminently aristocratic, the countryside, and never had it as yet introduced within the sacred boundaries of its circle such a horror as a family polluted by trade.

"Cotton," answered Sir George briefly; and then indeed his wife felt that the cup of her affliction was full.

"If it only had been wine," she said, hopelessly. "I am sure I don't know what the Deverills will think; and of course the girl will be unbearable. Besides"—with a sigh—"it will be such an additional expense."

"True," returned her husband, and the lines laid by care upon his face became more clearly defined; "but, as I said before, darling, it can not be helped, so we must only make the best of it."

But Lady Caroline could not "make the best of it" just then, and so went out of the room to consult with Mildred, of whose sympathy she was certain, the girl being more opposed to the coming of their visitors than even she could be.

Seven children had blessed the marriage of Sir George Trevanion and Lady Caroline. First, there was Charles, the heir, a great, tall, good-looking fellow, with a careless, sweet temper—"as like his father at that age," said his mother, "as ever a boy could be." He was about twenty-six at this time, and held a commission in a cavalry regiment. After him came Florence, who resembled nobody in particular, and had married during her first season—very desirably indeed—a Mr. Talbot, of very prepossessing appearance—when he had any expression in his face, which was seldom—and the owner of considerable property about twelve miles from King's Abbott.

It was always a great source of comfort to Lady Caroline's anxious mind that Florence had "got off" so well before Mildred was old enough to make her bow to the world. Had Harry Talbot dallied in his love-making for two years longer—as some young men are in the habit of dallying—instead of coming to the point at once—like a much-to-be-applauded gentleman, as he was—Lady Caroline would not have answered for the consequences. Mildred, her father's darling, was so much more beautiful—such a slight, exquisite girl she appeared, with the darkest violet eyes and the most enviable golden hair imaginable.

And yet, in spite of all her beauty, she had not half the number of lovers her sister Mabel could count, who was barely eighteen, and not nearly so handsome, Mildred being cold and proud, and almost haughty in her manner to strangers. Pride of birth was the rock on which she stumbled. Any family without a pedigree, no matter how rich and how well received by society in general, was as an abomination in her sight.

In between these two came Eddie, who was about nineteen at this time, a merry, reckless fellow, handsome as an Apollo, and the acknowledged pet amongst all the women in the county, far and near, old and young.

Eddie and Mabel were something like each other, both being much darker than the rest of the family, who were rather Saxon in their general appearance. Mabel, or "Queen Mab," or "the queen," as she was indiscriminately called, on account of a little stately walk she had that contrasted funnily with her face and manner, which were gay in the extreme, had dark eyes of a soft hazel, and hair nut-brown to match. She was quite as tall as her sister, and, though by no means as beautiful, was pretty enough to create a sensation anywhere. At eighteen she was an incorrigible flirt, but amiable and sweet enough to prevent her from running into extremes, and causing uneasiness in the home circle.

For all that, however, calm Mildred was more the "hearth-angel" than she was. To her, as to their mother, came all the boys, with the numerous griefs and annoyances that usually beset a schoolboy's path. Charles was very fond of asking her advice, and Eddie believed most firmly in her wisdom, generally addressing her under the title of "Minerva." Her father and mother had few secrets from her, and even Florence, who was slightly self-sufficient and given to assert herself, at times, with astonishing boldness, had been known, on two or three occasions, to come all the way from Ryelands to ask Mildred's opinion upon certain subjects.

Mildred at home and Mildred abroad were very different persons. She was most capable of loving, but her unfortunate coldness of demeanor prevented this from being universally acknowledged. Only her own people knew her tender, loving heart, and returned her affection in kind.

There were two other boys, mere youngsters, named George and Ernest, who were at present undergoing the discipline of school in some distant shire.

Sir George had discovered, some years previously, that he was not as well up in this world's goods as a man had need to be with seven growing-up children. But at the time he had put the evil thought behind him and considered it no more, until about a year back, when several circumstances had happened again to force it upon his memory. Debts somehow had begun to accumulate of late years, and now began to declare themselves with very disagreeable openness. The family lawyer shook his head solemnly; and Sir George in self-defense went home, and having sold two of his favorite hunters most disadvantageously, walked about his farm, doing gloomy penance, and was cross to his wife for the first time for a number of years.

But this state of things only lasted a very few days indeed, and at the end of that time, his third hunter having fallen lame, one of those disposed of was bought back again, at a very different price from that paid for it to Sir George, and presently the other followed suit; after which their master gave up the gloomy penance, to the great relief of the household at King's Abbott, who were considerably put out by it, and having kissed his wife, did not go round the farm for several days.

Lady Caroline of course soon discovered that they were in difficulties—indeed Sir George's face was incapable of concealing a secret—and these two women, in "mamma's" boudoir, discussing probabilities and improbabilities, and the selling of "papa's" hunters, until Mildred at length suggested that the annual visit to London should be given up—for this year at all events.

The Trevanions were determined also to follow up their lately begun economical designs by having a quiet autumn and winter at home, and had actually made up their minds, with Spartan heroism, not even to invite their usual number of friends for the hunting season at King's Abbott, when there reached them the unlucky letter from the Younges, saying how much the head of the family desired to see the friend of his boyhood—namely, Sir George.

This letter put a full stop to all their plans, and was looked upon as a brain-blow in more ways than one, as not only did it insure an expensive winter, but, what was worse, upon examination it was discovered that these friends of Sir George's youth were most disreputable in their antecedents, having been in trade. A cotton merchant! It sounded horrible! Cotton could not possibly mean anything but low birth, and low birth of course meant vulgarity.

Lady Caroline groaned in spirit, and thought dismally of what the Deverills and the Blounts and the Stanleys would say, finally going off to consult with her prime minister Mildred.

"It is all over," she began; "they must be asked."

"I never heard of such a thing in my life," said Miss Trevanion. "It is perfectly indecent—their asking themselves here. But what can one expect from such people? Good gracious, mamma, fancy a cotton merchant! It quite makes me shiver. How many of them are there?"

"Four," answered her mother. "Father, mother, daughter and son."

"Any more?" inquired Mildred, sarcastically.

"No, no more. Do you not think four too many?" asked Lady Caroline with surprise—never in her life, good soul, could she understand anything approaching sarcasm. "Of course, now they are coming, Mildred, we must only make the best of it, although I do wish it had been wine instead of cotton—it is so much more respectable—and I wish also that Miss Rachel Younge and her brother were not coming."

"What is his name?" Mildred demanded.

"Denzil, I believe—yes, Denzil Younge."

"What a pity they didn't call him 'Brigham' Younge when they were about it!" Miss Trevanion said; and then they both laughed.

"How can you be so absurd?" Lady Caroline exclaimed; afterward changing her tone to one of entreaty, she said, "But, really, you know, darling, we must be very civil to them, if only to please your papa. You will promise to be that, Mildred, will you not?"

"I suppose I could not go to Aunt Agnes for the next two months, could I?" Mildred asked, irrelevantly.

"Oh, Mildred!" cried poor Lady Caroline, tears coming into her eyes at the mere idea of being thus deserted in her need.

"I am a selfish wretch," declared Miss Trevanion, caressing her mother's hand and becoming penitent on the spot. "Of course, mamma, I will not leave you on any account in the hands of these terrible barbarians. I only said it half out of mischief and bad temper; why, you might be devoured by the time I got back! Have you told Mabel?"

"No. I came to see you first about it. What rooms shall we give them? The blue rooms, do you think, or the rooms in the western wing?"

"The blue rooms; they are the farthest off," said Miss Trevanion.

"Very good. I will tell Holland. Do you know they are coming on Friday, if—as Mr. Younge says in his letter—we can conveniently receive them on that day? Dear me, Mildred, I wonder what they will be like, and how long they will stay?"

"Oh, as to what they will be like," said Mildred, toasting her pretty feet comfortably before the fire, and looking as wise as Solomon, "I can tell you that. The old man will be like a Yorkshire farmer, only worse, because he will have a strong dash of Manchester mixed with his turnips, and he will be always using horribly old-fashioned words, and he will be very attentive to you, and will probably call you 'ma'am.' And Mrs. Younge will be large and fat and red, like the cook; and Miss Younge will be a mincing, silly schoolgirl, ready to die with laughter at everything Mabel says, and 'Brigham' will be a—boor, of course."

"What will the county say?" ejaculated poor Lady Caroline, elevating her hands and eyes, perfectly aghast at the pretty picture her daughter had drawn. "Really, Mildred, I shall die of shame."

"That will not do a bit of good," returned Miss Trevanion; "and of course you must be prepared to hear the county say all manner of unpleasant things—that they do not know what Sir George could be thinking of to invite such people to his house, and that the said people are extremely disgusting, and so on."

"But for all that you will be kind and civil to them—will you not, Mildred, my love?" her mother asked again, anxiously watching the girl's proud, beautiful face.

"Oh, yes, I will be civil to them," Miss Trevanion said; and then she kissed her mother and went out of the room.

(To be continued.)

Markings on Mars.

Astronomers now agree that the markings on the surface of Mars form a complete network of narrow, straight lines crossing the entire face of the planet in all directions, and are always visible. The narrowest are thirty to forty miles wide. Two hundred of these so-called canals have been charted. Many observers believe them to be stretches of land darkened annually by vegetation and laid out in strips to facilitate irrigation. It is supposed from the unity in the design of the network that the inhabitants of Mars are under one government and are highly skilled in the engineering demanded by the fact that the planet is entirely without rainfall. Students in hydraulics expect great things from the continued study of Mars.

Peter the Great of Russia had a very red face, covered with pimples from drinking. He was called the White Czar on account of the white robe he wore on state occasions.

Woman & Home

THE DIP BUCKLE.

The straight front which we now all present to the world has necessitated a like change in the attitude of our buckles. The dip buckle is now the thing, and, as is to be expected from its name, it gives that dip in front which Dame Fashion requires. It comes, of course, in all manner of styles and in all the popular metals, says the Pittsburg Dispatch. One form has, in addition to the slides at the side, through which the ribbon passes, two loops at the bottom, through which the ribbon ends are run and tied low down to give that slanting effect so much desired. This device is quite helpful, for the buckle is so shaped that it keeps its place and thus holds the knot of ribbon where it is tied, not always an easy matter to achieve otherwise. We all have had troubles of our own when our belts, ribbons, bows and the like persist in "riding up."

AS TO DRESSING THE HAIR.

With the flat hats and low turbans now in vogue a change in hairdressing became necessary, and the coiffure has receded from the extreme top and front of the head to the back. A charming arrangement has the hair waved softly all around, parted at the side and coiled loosely in two figure eights, held together by jewelled combs. The Catogan braid also is seen. This old-fashioned coiffure is made by tying the hair just below the crown and forming two braids that are looped up to the tying and fastened there. This leaves four lines of braided hair, which are flattened to the head and caught by pins, and finished with a fancy comb. If the loops of the hair extend beyond the nape of the neck, so much the more fashionable is the wearer. The front of the hair should be parted off and waved and fastened under the knot, says the Plain Dealer.

It seems quite certain that low and elaborate hairdressing, with many curls and braids, will take the place of the styles that have prevailed so long. The pompadour, as of old, parts reluctantly with its sway, but it grows smaller day by day and cannot last into the summer.

TAILOR-MADE GIRL DISAPPEARS.

The real tailor-made girl has left New York. I don't know where she is. Nobody else seems to know, either, or to care very much. While gowns made by gown makers of the masculine sex still prevail, the old-time tailor-made has disappeared almost completely, although one occasionally does observe a stunning cut and stunningly fitted plain frock on the middle-aged woman of splendid carriage, who knows the value of severe lines and elegant simplicity.—Chicago Times-Herald.

RECEPTION AND LUNCHEON GOWNS.

1. Reception gown of tan cloth, with embroidery on the bodice in shades of pink and green; trimmed with green panne velvet and white chiffon.

2. Luncheon gown of mauve crepe de chine, with bolero of panne velvet of deeper shade of mauve, yoke and sleeves of cluny lace; spangled tulle drawn from under bolero and knotted with rosette in front.

STUDY YOURSELF.

The success some people have in choosing colors for their own wear is easily understood, when you know how to do it yourself. To multiply a color is to accentuate it. Suppose your eyes are blue. Wear a blue ribbon at your neck, and they will look twice as blue! If there is a greenish tint in your eyes, do not be afraid to bring it out; the effect will fascinate you, says the Detroit News-Tribune. A peachblow tint in the cheeks will even remain unnoticed until you wear pink under your chin. Brown eyes will look ordinary, unless combined with brown hair; the effect of the two combined could not be other than beautiful. Gray will give a leaden tone to the complexion, unless one's color is naturally high. Satiny skin will show off doubly well when placed near satin. Materials tend to the same result, but to reproduce the exact shade of gray eyes in a gray waist is to achieve something startlingly becoming.

He is not a bad driver who knows how to turn.